



California State University Chico Academic Senate
March 2019

Resolution to Reject the General Education Taskforce Report (February 2019)

WHEREAS The mission of General Education at CSU, Chico is to create a common intellectual experience that prepares students for a rich and satisfying life and helps them discover the connections among various fields of knowledge while fostering an appreciation of the natural world and the many diverse expressions of human imagination and ingenuity, today and in the past; and

WHEREAS Beside skills and competencies offered by majors, General Education at Chico State is designed to offer students an integrated learning experience across the University's varied academic disciplines; and

WHEREAS The faculty at Chico State, like our colleagues across the CSU system, have worked assiduously and constantly to improve our General Education Program so that its courses are relevant and engaging; and

WHEREAS The issuance in May 2018 of EO 1100 revised and EO 1110 without adequate consultation with the ASCSU and the campus Senates created an unreasonable increase in workload and frustration for the faculty of most CSU campuses to integrate those policies, and did not respect the tenets of shared governance and the campus processes for revising their curriculum; and

WHEREAS The substantial and comprehensive GE reform contemplated by the General Education Taskforce (GETF) report will inhibit the goals of the GI 2025, and it will critically delay the goals of student success at the very moment campuses are starting to mobilize energy around retention, graduation and eliminating achievement gaps; and

WHEREAS Some recommendations of the task force (e.g. changes to the American Institutions requirements and the prohibition on double counting, among others) are likely to be deeply divisive and are unlikely to be broadly supported; and

WHEREAS There are significant concerns about a perceived lack of transparency of the workings of the task force and its membership; and

WHEREAS Campuses need adequate time to receive the task force report, collegially discuss their responses, craft feedback, and participate in meaningful ASCSU consultation regarding the task force report; and, therefore, be it

RESOLVED That the Academic Senate of California State University, Chico recommend that the ASCSU reject the General Education Task Force (GETF) report as a violation of the tenets of genuine shared governance, implementation of which would infringe upon faculty curricular authority; and be it further

RESOLVED Any changes in the requirements for General Education in the CSU must be developed thoughtfully and with deliberation and full and broad consultation with the ASCSU and all of the campus Senates of the CSU; and be it further

RESOLVED That the Chancellor's office must respect the curriculum development and revision processes on campuses by allowing a lengthy implementation timeline for any GE changes; and be it further

RESOLVED That any processes or changes in the curriculum of any CSU campus must be faculty driven. The mechanisms by which the General Education requirements in the CSU are developed and modified must go through campus shared governance processes and must respect the role of the faculty at each campus in the development and modification of curriculum as guaranteed by the Higher Education Employer-Employees Act of the State of California (HEERA) and commonly accepted practices endorsed by the American Association of University Professionals (AAUP); and be it

RESOLVED That this resolution be distributed to the members of the ASCSU, the Academic Senates of the CSU, the Office of the Chancellor, and the Board of Trustees of the CSU.

RATIONALE:

This resolution is based on the following considerations (many of these have been posited by others in our system, especially CSU Dominguez Hills, but also by CSU San Francisco, CSU San Jose, CSU East Bay, and CSU Stanislaus):

- The work of the task force was marked by a lack of transparency. The GETF conducted its discussions and proceedings behind closed doors. Meeting agendas, minutes, and other correspondence among task force members are not available, despite a public records request demanding their release.ⁱ
- Over nearly two years, the GETF did not make a meaningful effort to consult with CSU faculty or students. It did not solicit input from campus senates, and it studiously avoided input from faculty whose programs deliver General Education curricula and whose disciplinary expertise was directly relevant to its work.

- Despite the GETF’s stated commitment to make its work “data driven wherever possible rather than assumption based,”ⁱⁱ its report provided no evidence that current General Education Programs do not achieve their objectives, ignoring available data, assessments, and IRB-approved student surveys and questionnaires about key GE courses.

The report states that the CSU General Education Program is outdated, having been largely unmodified in several decades. This claim is profoundly misleading. Both the structure and content of campus programs have evolved consistently and continue to evolve. In fact, the past ten years have been marked by reflection, assessment, and redesign of GE programs across the CSU system.

The suggestion by the task force report that General Education, rather than structural inequities in contemporary American society, creates equity gaps is another unfounded argument. In fact, General Education is an antidote to such gaps in so far as it provides students with the intellectual armor they need to counter the anti-intellectualism, hyper-ethnocentrism, racism, and sexism that facilitate the persistence of structural inequalities.

The GETF report and recommendations perpetuate the unfounded opinion that existing curricular programs and faculty resistance to innovation are the primary obstacles to student success. At the same time, it does not address the significant resource deficits that create real obstacles to student learning, such as large class sizes, the outsourcing of General Education to poorly supported contingent faculty, and a decline in support services.

The Task Force rationale cites “mounting concerns about the erosion of confidence in the value of higher education, higher costs of education borne increasingly by students, attenuated times to degree completion, and low persistence rates,” yet the report gives no data showing how these “concerns” are tied to the current GE requirements nor does it indicate how the new recommendations will solve these concerns.

- The GETF proposes radical changes to the structure and content of CSU General Education programs. Such changes would be counterproductive to the stated aim of facilitating the attainment of GI 2025 goals. Comprehensive GE reform will critically delay the goal of student success at a time when campuses are mobilizing energy and progress around improving retention and graduation rates and eliminating student achievement gaps.

Its proposal follows quickly on the heels of the revised EO 1100, a change to General Education which itself generated time-consuming curricular modifications.

Further changes to GE across the system will generate significant bottlenecks that impede student progress by necessitating years of additional curricular modifications and by increasing curricular complexity. Undertaking substantial GE reforms now will undermine campus efforts to increase student success.

- Many of the programmatic recommendations advanced by the Task Force are problematic.

The proposal to eliminate the double counting of GE courses is contrary to revised EO 1100 and further contradicts one of the stated goals of the Task Force: to reduce the number of units students complete in GE. The proposal to eliminate double counting GE courses in the major is problematic for several reasons: 1) it will put pressure on high unit majors, particularly in science and engineering, who have worked hard to get their degree programs to 120 units; 2) it will erode the ability of small and medium-sized majors to attract students; and 3) there is no evidence provided that double-counting reduces students' progress to degree. Indeed, students' ability to double-count some courses, with adequate advising, actually assists their progress to degree.

Implementation of the Task Force's recommendations could disproportionately reduce enrollments in smaller academic programs that make important contributions to GE and our academic community more generally. In particular, the recommendations of the GETF directly conflict with the recommendations of the Chancellor's Ethnic Studies Task Force, which Chancellor White explicitly endorsed.ⁱⁱⁱ

The proposed GE program ascribes a drastically reduced role to disciplinary methods and knowledge in the arts, humanities, social sciences, physical sciences, the life sciences, and other areas essential for a well-rounded education.

The recommendation that existing Title V American Institutions courses be replaced by one poorly defined three-unit course in "Democracy in the U.S.," which *may* include American and California government and history (p. 7, emphasis added), is antithetical to educating an informed citizenry and is indefensible in light of the CSU's mission to advance and extend knowledge and learning throughout California, provide opportunities for individuals to develop intellectually, and prepare significant numbers of educated and responsible people to contribute to California's schools, economy, culture, and future.

ⁱ A Public Records Act Request for access to all records pertinent to the deliberations of the General Education Task Force was submitted on January 14, 2019. On February 8, the Chancellor's Office responded by sending a list of six links to documents available on the CSU webpage, none of which work. The CO's response claimed that for a variety of reasons it would be unable to produce additional documentation earlier than June 2019.

ⁱⁱ General Education Task Force (GETF), "Initial Update from the ASCSU General Education Task Force—March 2018" (March 2018)

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.calstate.edu/AcadAff/ethnicstudiesreport.pdf>. "Report of the California State University Task Force on the Advancement of Ethnic Studies," (January 2016)